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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
Washington 25, D. C.

FIELD MEMORANDUM SCS-1137

Re: Management Improvement
and Awards Program

November 29, 1950

TO ALL RANKING FIELD OFFICERS:

To meet the objective of the Service Work Improvement System for greater economy and efficiency in work operations, fullest use must be made of the ideas and suggestions which can be contributed by employees or groups of employees. The Soil Conservation Service has always had as a major objective the constant improvement of its program of soil and water conservation and sound land use, and great progress has been made in this direction. Much of this progress has been due to improvements in daily operations made by individuals or groups through on-site application of new techniques or through written suggestions which have been considered and adopted. Therefore it becomes an important obligation of the Service to stimulate employee interest in improving the efficiency and economy of work operations; to encourage the making of suggestions for improvement; and to give recognition for employee accomplishments by incentive awards. From the employee's point of view, anything that makes work easier and more productive increases job satisfaction.

Additional emphasis has been placed on management activities in the Soil Conservation Service through the management improvement program of the President, legislative enactments by Congress, and efforts of the Bureau of the Budget and the Civil Service Commission to gain wider participation and recognition for Federal employees making contributions to efficiency and effectiveness of work operations. The Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief have given their personal support to this program. A convincing demonstration of administrative intent to support and encourage the program on the part of all supervisory officials is needed to assure the fullest extent of employee participation.

This memorandum outlines arrangements for more effective administration of this phase of the work improvement system.

I. Scope of the Program

Management improvement includes the improvement of all lines of action large or small and all individual processes, procedures, devices or techniques designed to improve the efficiency and

effectiveness of operations and thereby reduce costs and save manpower. It includes also the rewarding of those people or groups of people who are responsible for such improvements, by suitable honor awards, meritorious pay increases, or cash awards now authorized or as may be authorized by future legislation. The present formal authorizations include the following:

1. Distinguished and Superior Service Awards as authorized under Section 14 of Public Law 600 and Executive Order 9817.
2. Cash awards for employee suggestions as authorized under Section 14 of Public Law 600 and Executive Order 9817.
3. Cash awards for efficiency either as individuals, shared with another person or as a group award as authorized under Title X of Public Law 429.
4. Superior Accomplishment Pay Increases as authorized by Public Law 429.

II. Organization to Handle the Program

In the past, two separate committees have functioned to guide the management improvement aspects of the program and the awards functions of the program.

The close relationship between the consideration of a management improvement proposal and the granting of awards has caused confusion in the operation of the program and made it less effective and more time-consuming than it should have been. In order to speed up the process, both of these inter-related functions are being integrated through the normal supervisory channels of the Service so that the day to day work of conducting an active program may be assigned to those operating divisions of the Service whose normal functions it is to carry on such operations. Responsibility for the guidance of both aspects of this program will hereafter be assigned to one committee, to be called the Management Improvement and Awards Committee, under the chairmanship or general supervision of the Key Management Representative. This committee will be composed of a maximum of eight members including the Chairman and Executive Secretary. The committee will have responsibility for:

1. Developing and recommending policies and procedures for operation of the program.
2. Recommending courses of action to stimulate employee participation.
3. Developing and improving criteria for granting of awards.
4. Reviewing and recommending action to be taken on suggestions and awards.

5. Devising and recommending procedures for getting approved suggestions incorporated into work operations of the Service.
6. Working on special assignments as made by the Key Management Representative of the Service.

Within limits established by the committee, the Executive Secretary will perform the necessary processing actions for carrying out the program. He will work closely with staff members who are experts in the field involved and who can act with the Executive Secretary as a sub-committee to determine action to be taken in processing management improvement proposals and awards. Clerical assistance for carrying out these functions will be provided by the Personnel Management Division.

Washington Office

A. Key Management Representative

The Deputy Chief of the Soil Conservation Service is designated by the Chief as the Key Management Representative to head the program for the Service.

B. Management Improvement and Awards Committee

1. Name:

The name of the new committee will be the "Management Improvement and Awards Committee."

2. Designation of Members:

The committee shall be composed of eight members designated as follows:

Deputy Chief - Chairman

Assistant Chief of Operations - Vice Chairman

Chief, Personnel Management Division

Staff Member, Personnel Management Division - Executive Secretary

Four other members of the Washington or Beltsville staff to be appointed by the Chief of the Service

3. Staff assistance:

- (a) In addition to the committee members, the Key Management Representative will designate Washington and Beltsville staff representatives in various subject matter fields to assist the Executive Secretary in handling suggestion and award cases.
- (b) Staff representatives will review and pass upon the merit of the suggestion and the appropriateness of the recommendation for award or other type of recognition and give their recommendations to the Executive Secretary for action or for consideration by the committee.

4. Executive Secretary

- (a) Designation of Executive Secretary. A staff member of the Personnel Management Division will be designated to act as the Executive Secretary.
- (b) Responsibilities of the Executive Secretary:
 - 1. To receive and process all recommendations for management improvements and awards.
 - 2. To discuss all proposals with appropriate staff representatives. In cases involving less than \$100 this group will, in effect, constitute a sub-committee meeting to decide upon a course of action.
 - 3. To process all cash awards of less than \$100 to completion.
 - 4. To present for consideration of the committee any policy question growing out of operation of the program or any cases involving special consideration.
 - 5. To develop and recommend to the committee procedures for carrying out the program.
 - 6. To carry out approved courses of action for stimulating employee participation in the program.
 - 7. To prepare agenda for committee meeting of matters that need consideration.
 - 8. To prepare reports as required and needed and to keep case histories of management improvement and awards actions.
 - 9. To carry out the recommendations of the committee.

The Regional Office

The Regional Directors will set up a basically comparable organization in their offices to carry out the functions outlined above. The Washington office should be kept currently advised of the membership of the committee and any changes that occur. The functions of the committees and members will differ somewhat in the fact that all recommended cash awards action must be sent to Washington for approval. The region, of course, maintains its delegated authority on meritorious pay increases.

Other appropriate departures from the Washington organization would include such items as:

1. Including State representatives on the committee.
2. Reducing size of committee.
3. Eliminating "formal" designation of staff representatives.
4. Handling all cases in committee instead of delegating limited authority to Executive Secretary. This may be feasible, at the option of the region, where volume is relatively small.

State Offices

Establishment of State committees is optional with the regions since the necessity for a formal committee to handle this activity will depend on the size of the problem in the State involved. It is recommended that Regional Directors give consideration to the establishment of such committees in the larger States. In small States the work can be handled informally.

Where such committees are formed, the size of the committee is optional. It is recommended that either the State Conservationist or one of his assistants be designated as the chairman.

J. E. Tyler
Acting Chief

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